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RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 1284
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 5155
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 0845
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ FEB LIMA 1778
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 4972
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 5348
RUEHQ/AMEMBASSY QUITO 0712
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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SUBJECT: ARGENTINA ON CONTACTS WITH HAMAS

REF: STATE 28802

Classified By: Ambassador Lino Gutierrez, Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) POLOFF delivered reftel points February 23 to Viviana Jones, Deputy Director in the MFA's Office of North American and Middle East Affairs. Jones said that the GOA had received no requests for a meeting with Hamas representatives, and that in any case, the GOA does not meet with "political parties," only governmental representatives. Jones also said Brazilian officials told her recently that they also have not been approached for a Hamas meeting.

¶2. (C) Jones said that GOA policy remained unchanged with regards to Palestinian statehood: Argentina supports the peaceful creation of a "viable" Palestinian state living side by side with Israel. With regards to the Quartet conditions for dealing with Hamas (i.e. a halt to violence, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of prior Palestinian Authority commitments), Jones speculated whether it was completely necessary for Hamas to assume those commitments prior to engagement with the international community. (Jones was a GOA election observer during last month's PA elections.) Comparing the situation to Northern Ireland, she said that had the IRA been forced to completely renounce its aims before entering into peace talks with the UK "there would have never been a peace process."

¶3. (C) Jones continued that it would be bad for Hamas to be "isolated" and that this could force them into alliances with, for example, Iran. POLOFF said that Hamas itself had to choose between isolation or a true change of its violent policies. Absent compliance with the Quartet's minimum requirements, added POLOFF, it would be virtually impossible for the international community to engage on any level with a Hamas-controlled Palestinian government.

¶4. (C) Jones concluded by saying that much depended on the composition of the new Palestinian Authority. She did not commit to no GOA contact with a Hamas-led PA, but in the event of contact she agreed to support the Quartet position, as well as to our request that a potential meeting would be handled at a relatively low level.

GUTIERREZ